

July 26, 2007

Education Committee  
Higher Education Task Force

During the Higher Education Task Force committee meeting on July 17, 2007, items were discussed that are having a dramatic impact on the construction industry.

The Construction Industry agrees that the UCAT does benefit certain areas in the State of Utah.

However, consideration must be given as you weigh the full impact of CTE delivery in the state and how UCAT interfaces with USHE institutions.

An inability for the commissioner or board of regents to have UCAT oversight sets the stage for improper marketing, development, and delivery of courses. Here are several examples that may be useful as graphic representations of the potential problem.

OWATC has successfully recruited the union electrical and sheet metal apprenticeships from UVSC and SLCC. Both union programs are able to participate in this seductive offer by conducting training at their offices in Salt Lake. OWATC clearly crosses geographic boundaries in search of students. They are not restrained to developing new programs but instead focus on existing programs that will increase their student hours with little effort on their part and no regard for the impact on students or current providers. (both programs were discontinued at UVSC and SLCC)

MATC is currently engaged in a shared administration arrangement with UVSC for the apprenticeship programs. This effort is being sold as a positive cooperative effort to improve both programs. As a P.R. tool that may be true, as a practical function for industry it couldn't be farther from the truth. There is a thinly veiled goal of MATC acquiring these programs.

MATC appears ill-equipped to provide entrance or assessment testing. This further encourages students who wish to skirt the prerequisite requirements simply choose to enroll at MATC rather than UVSC.

State board management and oversight of the programs is complicated by introducing an additional and unneeded second participant in the Mountain Land region. MATC enrolls students into UVSC courses, complicating the scheduling and management of students and classrooms.

MATC does most of its recruiting in UVSC classrooms. As listed above they seem to be driven by a quest for students instead of a desire to provide quality training.

If the students were given the choice, most would choose to attend UVSC where they would have the option to earn a degree that would actually mean something

toward their future educational advancement.

I am told that DATC has hired professional recruiters who spend time in places like Kennecott and other companies that have enjoyed service from the local community college for generations. The package being presented by UCAT schools promises training equivalent to the college at a fraction of the price per student.

This leads one to re-ask the question: “Are we looking for quality in our educational programs or are we just looking to see how many students we can push through at a cheap price?”

The UCAT system is well equipped to enter established programs in all regions and erode college participation with inexpensive tuition and promises of future AAT degrees. Their efforts have a devastating effect on the industry as a whole when they drift from their mission. They certainly help the immediate customer by offering cheap tuition but the collapse of programs in the areas they recruit from harms the contractors, the students and the Colleges in that region who do not have the luxury of providing UCAT funded training at their facility.

A plea was made for a UCAT AAT degree. What would the value of the AAT degree be? From what I can tell, it would be a nice piece of paper on the wall but what would it do toward the advancement of the student for future academic endeavors?

The statement that industry places a high value on a 2 year degree is correct. The idea that UCAT schools should move to a degree bearing institution was misrepresented. The primary reason for such a move would be to continue with low tuition for UCAT programs and consistent erosion of college programs. The solution for this dilemma is having regional colleges provide the training that offers or requires a degree and UCAT to focus on the short term non-credit training.

UCAT schools should not be allowed to duplicate existing educational programs as was originally stated in their charter.

Members of the Construction Industry should be involved in this decision making process, especially when it has such a dramatic effect on their industry.

Thank you,

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